

What God Joined and Men Separated

by Dennis Lange

Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16). The great commission in Matthew reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (28:19,20).

Jesus united baptism with the great commission. He didn't put scripture reading with it or church attendance or prayer or even the Lord's Supper with the great commission. He put all His authority behind the great commission and made baptism a part of it.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter didn't separate what the Lord joined together. He commanded believers to "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (v.41).

The Samaritans believed and were baptized (Acts 8:4-12). The Spirit joined together evangelism and baptism, not overlooking it.

The eunuch, after being taught by Philip, said, "Look! Here is water! What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:26-39). Philip didn't separate what Jesus had joined together, but taught about baptism as part of teaching about Christ. The eunuch was eager to get to the water.

Among the first things done by Ananias when he came to Saul was to command him to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Ananias didn't separate what God had joined together in evangelism.

Lydia believed and was baptized (Acts 16:13-15). The Spirit again keeps baptism in the forefront as Jesus did in making it part of the great commission.

The Philippian jailer was baptized after midnight (Acts 16:23-34). Thus, the Spirit notes through the word that Paul and Silas didn't separate what God had joined together, even though it wasn't convenient.

I have a little tract someone gave me from Bill Bright's ministry. It incorrectly tells what a person should do to be saved. Then, after the individual has prayed and is supposedly forgiven, it gives these suggestions for Christian growth: prayer, read God's word, obey God moment by moment, witness for Jesus, trust God for every detail of your life, and allow the Holy Spirit to control and empower your daily life. What does the tract NEVER mention, thus separating what God joined together with evangelism? It never mentions baptism. Yet we see in scripture that those who were directly guided by

God and approved by God in what they did NEVER failed to mention baptism IMMEDIATELY!

Josh McDowell did the same thing in the first edition of Evidence that Demands a Verdict. He left out baptism in his instructions to those who were learning about Jesus.

Billy Graham, in his book How To Be Born Again, NEVER mentions baptism in the evangelism process. Graham instructed his readers to pray for forgiveness, and he told them what to do afterwards - to get a Bible, learn to pray, and find Christian fellowship. He separated baptism like the others, never even mentioning it. I once heard a sermon by Billy Graham on the radio. He was reading Peter's sermon on Pentecost and came to Acts 2:38 where he read, "And Peter said to them, "Repent." And he never finished the sentence or the verse and never referred to it in the rest of his sermon.

Many think men are saved and then baptize them weeks or months later. Some wait till Easter or another holy day they have invented. But, Jesus and the Spirit of God put baptism in its proper place and baptism in the New Testament was always immediate, even when it was inconvenient.

What God joined together, men have separated. Why? Because they don't teach what the Lord says about baptism, choosing instead to follow another doctrine and baptize for purposes they have concocted. But, we must listen to God and not to men.